

THE SPIS:

A

POEM

[Price a BRITISH SIX-PENCE.]



T H E S P I S: *h*

O R, A

CRITICAL EXAMINATION

INTO THE

MERITS of all the Principal PERFORMERS

BELONGING TO

DRURY-LANE THEATRE.

D U B L I N:

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THE SPIS.

BOLD is his task in this discerning age,
When every witling prates about the stage;
And some pert title arrogantly brings
To trace up nature thro' her noblest springs:
Bold in such times, his task must be allow'd
Who seeks to form a judgment for the croud;
Presumes the public sentiment to guide,
And speaks at once to prejudice and pride.
Of all the studies in these happier days,
By which we soar, ambitiously to praise.

Of

6 T H E S P I S.

Of all the fine performances of art,
Which charm the eye, or captivate the heart;
None like the stage our admiration draws;
Or gains so high, and proper, an applause.
Yet, has this art unhappily no rules
To check the vain impertinence of fools,
To point out rude deformity from grace,
And strike a line 'twixt acting and grimace,

HIGH as the town, with reverence we may name,
And stamp its general sentiments to fame;
Loud, as, perhaps, we echo to its voice,
And pay a boundless homage to its choice;
Still, if we look, minutely, we shall find
Each single judge so impotent and blind,
That ev'n the actor whom we most admire,
For ease or humour, dignity or fire,
Shall often blush to meet the ill-earn'd bays,
And pine beneath an infamy of praise.

How oft, soul-searching GARRICK, have I hung,
On every accent of that wond'rous tongue;

When

When in Old LEAR, returning into sense,
And faintly guessing at some past offence,
To gain CORDELIA's pardon thou hast pray'd,
And knelt by instinct with that suffering maid!
How has my breast then labour'd with its sigh,
And the big sorrow delug'd all my eye;
While keen delight perform'd a traitor's part,
And ach'd intensely round my struggling heart!
Yet, in those moments, when I sought to find
An equal transport in the public mind;
When I believ'd a sympathy wou'd shine
In every eye as honestly as mine;
A lifeless pause, perhaps, has gloom'd along,
And drowsy dulness sat upon the throng;
Enormous curls have slept on empty blocks,
Or well-bred curtsies shot from box to box;
Whereas, when prisoner, and in fetters bound,
A peal of praise has thunder'd all around,
And every hand employ'd its utmost pains,
To clap the mighty merit of the chains.

WHEN things, like these, for ever give offence,
And empty show is lifted over sense: When

8 T H E S P I S.

When men throw nature negligently by,
 And judge not from the feelings, but the eye;
 Nay, when our actors, in their busiest parts,
 While fear or hope stand beating at our hearts,
 From the warm scene may scandalously run,
 And feast the galleries with an instant pun;
 Then, keen-ey'd satire consciously shou'd rise,
 And hold a mirror to the public eyes;
 Alike regardless of her foe or friend,
 With candour blame, with honesty commend,
 Applaud, if right, the man she may detest,
 And strike, if wrong, the brother of her breast.

'Tis on the stage, as 'tis in life, we find
 No single man quite excellent in mind;
 Nor do we meet a bosom so deprav'd,
 So lost in vice, and utterly enslav'd,
 But what, at times, some transient spark of grace
 Has beam'd his eye, and flush'd upon his face;
 With pitying warmth intuitively stole,
 And pierc'd the Stygian fable of his soul.

Therefore,

T H E S P I S. 9

Therefore, unlike some brothers of the pen,
 Who judg'd of actors as they judg'd of men,
 In wild extremes ridiculously trod,
 And drew, by turns, a dæmon or a god;
 My tints from life shall regularly glow,
 And paint both faults and beauties as they grow;
 Convinc'd, the truest pictures must be made,
 Where light is blended properly with shade.

LONG in the annals of theatric fame,
 Has truth grac'd GARRICK with a foremost name;
 Long in a wide diversity of parts,
 Allow'd his double empire o'er our hearts;
 Either in mirth to laugh us to excess,
 Or, where he weeps, to load us with distress—
 Nor is it strange, that ev'n in partial days,
 He gains so high an eminence of praise;
 When his united requisites are more,
 Than ever centred in one mind before:
 Say, if we search, minutely, from the age
 In which old THESPIS first began the stage,

B

And

10 T H E S P I S.

And range thro' all the celebrated climes,
 In which it flourish'd, to the present times,
 Where shall we find an actor who has prest,
 With such extensive force upon the breast,
 Fill'd such opposing characters for years,
 Unmatch'd, alike, in laughter or in tears?
 Others, perhaps, the greatest of their hour,
 Whom fame extoll'd as prodigies of power,
 Have yet to scanty limits been confin'd,
 And shewn but one dull tendency of mind;
 On bold blank-verse heroically rose,
 Or meanly ambled upon humbler prose——
 OTHELLO's form a BETTERTON might wear,
 And rend the soul with horror and despair;
 BOOTH might with conscious majesty declaim,
 And build on CATO a substantial name;
 In WILDAIR, WILKES most certainly might soar,
 And CIBBER's fop set millions in a roar;
 But which of these like GARRICK cou'd appear,
 In ROMEO, SHARPE, in DRUGGER, and in LEAR;
 Fill the wide rounds of passion as they fall,
 And shine with equal excellence in all?

Yet,

T H E S P I S. II

YET, tho' thus warm I freely pour my thoughts,
 I still must think that GARRICK has his faults;
 Some casual errors in his parts, which run
 As specks sometimes will fasten in the sun;
 Ev'n in his LEAR, where desperately wild,
 He stabs the ruffians to preserve his child,
 And quite worn out with tenderness and rage,
 Leans, wholly spent, and breathless on the stage;
 Then, while the tide of sympathy has rose,
 And every bosom labour'd with his woes,
 Then have I seen him negligently fall,
 Full with his face against the prison wall,
 Snatch every feature strangely from our sight,
 And check the flood of exquisite delight.

THO' fam'd APELLES, at a touch cou'd give,
 The warming canvass almost how to live;
 Tho' scarce to less than deity, when grown,
 He call'd out new creations of his own;
 Yet, when the weakness of his art he saw,
 The Grecian father's agony to draw,
 'Twas wise, a veil upon his face to throw,
 Whose pangs he found impossible to shew;

But when, ev'n Shakespear never cou'd possess
 Too big a grief for GARRICK to express,
 When his sharp eye so piercingly can roll,
 And dart such instant passions thro' the soul,
 'Tis doubly wrong, the tenderer the case,
 To hide the wond'rous workings of his face ;
 To check our hopes or play upon our fears,
 And damp the rich-soul'd luxury of tears.

For five long years in dark oblivion thrown,
 Has LEE remain'd, neglected and unknown,
 Unless when chance, or some capricious start,
 Has kindly blest him with a decent part ;
 Yet was this LEE, at one auspicious hour,
 Allow'd to boast a little share of power,
 Was thought in various characters to please,
 And fam'd no less for energy than ease.
 For me, who feel a tenderness of breast,
 Where'er a dawn of merit seems oppress'd,
 I may, perhaps, be partial to his faults,
 And do him more than justice in my thoughts ;
 But when I see the genuine passions rise,
 Which flame in ABOAN's red resenting eyes ; When

When I behold in VERNISH's disgrace
 The struggling soul so stamp'd upon the face;
 Or meet in BELMONT with that dangerous art,
 Which ev'n for crimes can plead about the heart;
 I own, it wounds my temper and my taste
 To find him still so despicably plac'd;
 Sent on in FRENCHMEN, RALEIGHS, and GLENDOWERS,
 While things like PACKER surfeit us for hours.
 'Tis true that LEE has fatally imbib'd
 A mode of speech not easily describ'd;
 A nice affected drawlingness of phrase,
 A wire-drawn tone in every thing he plays;
 With which, too oft, most execrably fine,
 He racks a word, and tortures out a line;
 Yet still has LEE a consequence of form,
 A voice, a look so capable to warm,
 A stage-struck heat, so vehemently strong,
 With such a piercing consciousness of wrong,
 That ev'n when BARRY, in his noblest course,
 Some few weeks since exerted all his force;
 Strain'd every nerve to draw the scattering crown,
 And cramm'd his moon-ey'd idiot on the town;

Then

Then did this LEE burst on us in a blaze,
 And wake us all to wonder and to praise;
 Give vile IAGO's deeply scheming ire
 The boldest touches of dramatic fire,
 And swell the gen'rous PIERRE with a flame
 That left ev'n JAFFIER but a second fame.
 Hence, mean foe'er, as managers may prize,
 I look on LEE with very different eyes,
 And freely place, however they disdain,
 His chair next GARRICK's high in Drury-lane.

THE greatest charge our little judges lay
 When HOLLAND's worth they critically weigh,
 Is, that in all the characters he tries,
 His master GARRICK ever fills his eyes;
 That, meanly servile in his walk of parts,
 He strives to shine by imitative arts,
 And now, so dull a copyist is grown,
 To want all sense and feeling of his own.
 In this nice age, when fatally disgrac'd,
 Poor sense falls martyr'd at the shrine of taste,
 When a mere word, indefinite and vain,
 The random coinage of the coxcomb's brain,

By

By truth and judgment wholly unconfin'd,
 And differing still in ev'ry different mind,
 Usurps the air of sentiment, to pass
 For sterling gold her despicable brass;
 Then imitation certainly must fall,
 And raise the general enmity of all;
 Must own the pride-taught sentence to be just,
 And lick the foot that tramples it in dust.
 Yet, sure, if GARRICK hitherto has ran
 By reason's line, and justly laid his plan
 On that exalted principle of art,
 Which knocks with truth's bold hand against the heart,
 If in the various characters he plays
 The genuine form of nature he conveys,
 And hits, in short, upon that happy right,
 Which gives the finest essence of delight,
 Those who affect to turn away the head,
 When HOLLAND seeks his vestiges to tread,
 Must argue less from judgment than from whim,
 Since copying nature is to copy him.
 But, why at all should critics proudly start,
 And seem to frown on imitative art?

Where

Where worth, or fame our admiration raise,
 A wish to copy is a kind of praise—
 Say, in this age, some genius shou'd we find
 So rich in thought, and vigorous in mind,
 As gave the fury of a stage desire,
 Ev'n the pale glimm'ring of a SHAKESPEAR'S fire,
 Should we not all inevitably throng
 To hail the glowing wonders of his song,
 And with a wild munificence reward
 The faintest traces of our deathless bard?
 For me, unapt to criticise in haste,
 And little guilty of a modern taste;
 I own this HOLLAND ever my offence,
 But where he draws from GARRICK, and from sense;
 While he does this, I patiently attend,
 And often find no little to commend,
 With honest warmth his plaudit I can hear,
 And join myself the tribute of a tear.
 But when some air-born fancy to pursue,
 He lets his master once escape his view;
 When much too great for imitation grown,
 He boldly seeks a manner of his own,

Sententious,

Sententious, dull, and heavy he appears,
 His words like weights hang dragging on our ears;
 Fatigue to death in spite of all our pow'r,
 And drawl the minute's sentence to an hour—
 Nor is this all, a stupid sort of stare,
 A starch'd, stiff, stalling, awkwardness of air,
 Absorb at once his figure and his face,
 And scorn all marks of nature and of grace;
 While the purs'd lips, to wind up ev'ry pause,
 Important swell and bully for applause.

Few for so short an interval have gain'd
 A higher rank than POWELL has obtain'd;
 And few, in fact, at present on the stage,
 Deserve a warmer notice from the age.
 Form'd with some lines that happily express
 No little sense of pity and distress;
 And bless'd with tones that frequently impart
 No little share of softness to the heart,
 On many minds he tenderly can steal,
 And teach a drowsy auditor to feel.

C

Hence,

Hence, in those parts where wretchedness and years,
Alarm alike our pity and our fears,
Where the poor LUSIGNAN, from prison led,
Shakes the white honours of his sacred head:
O'er his sweet Pagan tenderly complains,
And calls again for darkness, and for chains;
Or, where old HENRY, sick'ning with despair,
Upbraids the wildness of his madcap heir;
In parts like these, to POWELL I attend,
A strong admirer, and a steady friend.—
But, when in gay LOTHARIO he wou'd shew,
The sprightly airs of libertine and beau;
Or give in TOWNLY, to a modish wife,
The nicer touches of superior life;
Not all the scrapes, or cringes which he tries,
Those paltry arts of little men to rise;
The scorn of sense and judgment can remove,
Or teach one honest blockhead to approve.

As yet, two raw young striplings on the stage,
Unfit for fight, tho' burning to engage,

Led

Led on by hope, courageously to press,
 Yet taught by sense, to practise for success;
 No judgment now of CAUTHERLY I frame;
 Nor settle BENSLEY's title to a name.—

Where first essays are diffidently try'd,
 A candid mind must cautiously decide;
 Nor rashly risque opinions, which in time,
 The Muse herself may censure as a crime.

WHERE the gay Muse in laughter loves to sport,
 And brisk THALIA holds her hum'rous court,
 YATES with high rank, for ever must be plac'd,
 Who blends such strict propriety with taste;
 From nature's fount so regularly draws,
 And never seeks to trick us of applause.
 Mark, when he plays, no vacancy of face,
 No wand'ring eye, or ignorant grimace,
 Is rudely suffer'd once to intervene,
 Or check the growing business of a scene;
 Nay, in his silence happily employ'd,
 He looks continual meaning on the void;
 Bids every glance with character be fraught,
 And swells each muscle with a burst of thought.

Hence, in those cruder sections of a part,
 Where want of humour must be fill'd by art,
 Where the poor poet in some luckless fit
 Mistakes a dull prolixity for wit;
 His merit shines with undiminish'd rays,
 And lifts whole troops of RESTLESS's to praise.—
 Yet there are times, when spight of all his care,
 Our taste must bristle, and our sense must stare:
 When a new part unhappily he plays,
 A thousand doubts perplex him, and amaze;
 Fast from himself he tremblingly retires,
 Nor trusts that worth which all the world admires;
 But on a sea of causeless terror tost,
 Allows both mind and mem'ry to be lost.

BUT tho' on YATES the comic Muse may show'r
 An ample fund of humour and of pow'r;
 Tho' in his walk of characters he claims,
 So high a place among theatric names,
 Still there are others in her smiles who share,
 And prove her generous as they know her fair.
 Oft in some whim, the buxom nymph will try
 To pass for KING upon the public eye:

On

On TOM or RANGER, wantonly will seize,
 And give us all his spirit and his ease ;
 Again, in PRATTLE physically prim,
 She steals each look and attitude from him ;
 And like a virgin, whose unpractis'd breast
 Some blooming youth entirely has possess'd ;
 Who, if mischance unhappily should start,
 To wound the face that captivates her heart,
 Feels no unkind propensity to rove,
 But throbs all pitying with a softer love ;
 So, when emaciate with disease and years,
 Her fav'rite KING in OGLEBY appears,
 The comic Muse exerts unusual force,
 To call down laughter from its richest source ;
 Glows with a flame additionally warm,
 And seems in more than raptures with his form——
 O! that the goddess, in some lucky hour
 Wou'd wisely try the utmost of her pow'r,
 Wou'd tell her KING, that in the well-bred smart,
 Too great a pertness quite destroys the part ;
 And, when a BASSET's habit he wou'd wear,
 Dismiss the saucy SMATTER from his air.

VERNON

VERNON to favour ne'er can have pretence,
A singer truly—and disgrac'd with sense.
Why should a fellow blest with such a strain,
As still can charm us to the verge of pain,
The melting soul in extasy absorb,
And almost pluck a planet from its orb ;
Why should he strive in such a sing-song age,
To soar by sterling merit on the stage,
Or seek by knowledge in dramatic laws,
To reach a vulgar, MASCULINE applause ?
Did he indeed, ne'er generously rise
Beyond the TOMB TALE, or the LONDON CRIES,
With which of late, so dead to every shame,
He meanly pimp'd for prostituted fame,
Some room for easy pardon might be found,
And dullness join most lovingly with sound ;
But, when PHARNACES, or MACHEATH we see
So nerv'd with thought, so spirited and free,
When ev'n his flimsiest characters of song
Can strike our minds so wonderfully strong,
Our honest rage eternally must live,
And prudence make it madness to forgive.

PALMER,

PALMER, from playing almost ev'ry night,
Has grown so long familiar to our sight,
That ev'n in scenes scarce possible to bear,
We kindly rate him as a decent play'r.
Yet, since the stage its first existence drew,
An odder compound never struck our view;
Nor did the drama ever yet produce
So bad an actor half so fit for use.
Mark with what grace his person is design'd.
For parts of life, and characters refin'd;
Yet, that strange shambling of deportment see,
Tho' easy, stiff; and manacled, tho' free;
Tho' strait, yet doubled; tortur'd, tho' in form;
Aukward, tho' bred; and spiritless, tho' warm—
Tho' fraught with tones articulate and clear,
He keeps an endless screaming on the ear;
Howls out young OAKLEY in such hideous strains,
As midnight wolves might use upon the plains,
And strangles poor Sir BRILLIANT in a note
Too nicely horrid for a human throat.
But, tho' in wide and capital respects,
I see in PALMER manifest defects;

Tho'

Tho' that address so terrible must seem,
 And that vile voice excruciate with its scream;
 Yet, ever ready in the heaviest parts,
 He scorns all aid from despicable arts,
 And ever master of his author's aim,
 Just to his sense, and cautious of his fame,
 With secret pleasure I behold him rise,
 And cry, "Peace," always to my ears and eyes——

If strong good sense, and latitude of mind,
 A keen conception, and a taste refin'd,
 A long acquaintance with those nicer arts
 That read thro' life, and study thro' our hearts,
 An actor's name with certainty might raise,
 Or bind his temples with the generous bays,
 Who against LOVE a syllable cou'd breathe,
 Or once dispute his title to a wreath?
 But, 'tis not taste or judgment which can give
 An actor's name eternally to live;
 Or ev'n the widest knowledge of mankind,
 Which stamps, thro' time, his image on the mind—
 Hence, tho' in FALSTAFF, LOVE has oft express'd,
 A nice observance of the human breast; Tho'

Tho' in his BAYS we readily admire
 The critic's clearness and the actor's fire,
 Yet, when we see him on GRANADA's throne,
 The dupe of ZARA's fury and his own;
 Or mark in GLOSTER, with what nerveless rage
 He drives poor SHORE to wander from the stage,
 We all lament the cruelty of fate,
 Which damns so good an actor into state,
 And find these sceptres quite as dangerous things,
 To mimic monarchs as to actual kings—

IN foreign footmen, BADDELY alone
 Preserves the native nasilness of tone,
 And in his manner strongly shews ally'd
 Their genuine turn of abjectness and pride.
 If proofs are wanting, on CANTON I call,
 And ask the general sentiments of all—
 Here then, secure of competence and name,
 He ought to rest his fortune and his fame,
 And not in buckish epilogues, which spring
 With real life from nobody but KING ;

At random risque, the favour which we show'r
On scenes more suited to his taste and pow'r——

BLEST with the happiest nothingness of form,
Which nature e'er with being strove to warm,
On life's just scale scarce capable to stand,
A kind of mandrake in creation's hand;
See DODD, in all his tininess of state,
Resist his stars, and counteract his fate,
On actual wants preposterously shine,
Absurdly great, and despicably fine——
Fram'd at his birth, a coxcomb for the stage,
He soars the foremost fribble of the age,
And struck by chance on some egregious plan,
A mere nice prim, epitome of man,
In every coinage of the poet's brain,
Who blends alike the worthless and the vain,
Who in such parts as FADDLE, has design'd
A foppling figure for a villain's mind;
There DODD's fine want of all exterior weight,
New points our laugh, or doubly whets our hate.

Hangs

Hangs the vile slave more openly in morn,
 And brands him still with aggravated scorn——
 But when at WILDAIR's elegance he tries,
 Or seeks in well-bred NOVELTY to rise;
 When on those parts he fatally will strike,
 Which urge no scorn, and furnish no dislike,
 There all his nice inanity misplac'd,
 Disgusts alike our judgment and our taste:
 There he provokes our ridicule, or rage,
 And melts poor WILDAIR down into a page——

'Tis true, in life we frequently behold,
 A daring spirit in the smallest mould,
 And ne'er from face or person think to find
 The latent turn of principle or mind:
 But in the drama, with creative fire,
 We give each part the person we desire,
 Expect all grace in BEVIL's shou'd be seen,
 But ask for SNEAK's diminutive and mean——
 Hence, if deceiv'd, that fascinating rage
 Which nerves the scene, and vivifies the stage,
 Calls out illusion thro' the roar of strife,
 And warms the moral fiction into life;

That instant, flags no more to be possess'd,
And spreads one torpid dullness thro' the breast—

BORN to delight a laughter-loving age,
And give fresh funds of humour to the stage;
Mark with what strength of unaffected ease,
That happy WESTON commonly can please:
Tho' bold, yet simple; forcible, tho' cool;
Fine without trick; and finish'd without rule—
In those still scenes of *scarce existing* life,
Where SNEAK breathes only to obey a wife;
Or where poor DRUGGER publicly display'd,
Hangs out the mere dull animal of trade;
There WESTON's worth with certainty may rest,
Nor fear the strictest rigidity of test;
There a sublime stupidity of face,
As dead to sense as destitute of grace,
A fix'd, relaxless vacancy of lines,
With such true genius generally shines,
That quite surpriz'd, tho' satisfied we gaze,
And all is mirth, astonishment, and praise.
Of all the walks in which the hum'rous pow'r
Of comic wit can exercise an hour; Perhaps

Perhaps, that cold inanimated way
 In which an actor never seems to play;
 In which the chiefest merit of a part
 Exists entirely in the want of art;
 The strongest force of requisites may claim,
 And prove the hardest avenue to fame——
 To WESTON praise, then generously true,
 The Muse shall raise him publicly to view;
 A first-rate actor of the NOKES's kind,
 Best when least shewn, and happiest when confin'd——
 But, when by some fatality misled,
 A rage for praise has overfet his head;
 When grown quite arch he madly quits his place,
 And seeks to soar by pertness and grimace;
 When in attempting at some paltry joke,
 The fine dry dullness of his face is broke,
 With just disdain I turn my head aside,
 And damn alike his ignorance and pride——

To say that HAVARD never has a claim
 To some small portion of theatric fame;

To

To say quite roundly, that we never shed
 Some transient gleams of favour on his head,
 The public knowledge grossly would abuse,
 And fix a lasting stigma on the Muse;
 Yet, when our eye upon his claim we throw,
 And see what lifeless plaudits we bestow,
 When thro' his round of requisites we trace,
 Think on his voice, his figure, and his face,
 And find plain sense, and memory, at most
 Are all the mighty merits he can boast,
 We steal in pity from our stricter plan,
 To praise his private virtues as a man,
 And while the charms of genuine worth engage,
 Detest the hour he first beheld a stage.

HURST, with his talents for life's antient scenes,
 Must rise in time, if mindful of the means;
 But when with years, and with diseases bow'd,
 What need of tones extravagantly loud?
 LAURENCE may counsel, and express his fears,
 Yet shew some kind attention to our ears;

And

And woe-worn ADAM may exclaim for bread,
 Without once splitting a spectator's head—
 He who would seize an audience by the heart,
 Shou'd always judge the nature of his part;
 And in proportion as the scene requires,
 Suppress the latent working of his fires;
 Since too much force propriety destroys,
 And white-hair'd grief is never mark'd by noise;
 Should poor old LEAR forget his tott'ring gait
 To ape young AMMON's majesty and state,
 Or godlike CATO from his seat advance,
 To treat the grinning gallery with a dance;
 With what a wild amazement would we stare,
 And check the mad'ning progress of the play'r?
 If then, with HURST we mildly wou'd engage,
 And ask the various properties of age,
 Wou'd palsied limbs be all he wish'd to own,
 Or wou'd he give it feebleness of tone?

BUT mark with what vulgarity of stare,
 What low unmeaning impudence of air
 That mud-ey'd MOODY, whose relentless face,
 No blush e'er crimson'd with a moment's grace, Gapes

Gapes round the house, regardless of his part,
 All brass in front, and marble all in heart;
 For him no scene, however it may flow
 With high-wrought wit, or agonizing woe,
 Once on his breast can fortunately steal,
 Or teach that ruthless bosom how to feel—
 Yet tho' cut off from ev'ry just pretence,
 To taste, to nature, decency and sense,
 Tho' no blest beam of sympathy e'er stole
 To rouse the deep stagnation of his soul;
 Still, while O'CUTTER happily can please
 With brainless brav'ry, and with brutal ease;
 While ev'ry human principle of breast,
 Falls vilely martyr'd to an IRISH jest,
 There his wide want of sentiment and shame,
 So nicely tallies with the poet's aim,
 That truth herself must combat in her cause,
 And yield the crown of infamous applause—

Not so the modest ACKMAN strikes our view,
 Whose parts, tho' neither eminent nor new,
 Still from his strict propriety and care,
 Must here be rank'd a tolerable play'r.

Small

Small as his various characters appear,
 He ne'er offends our vision, or our ear,
 But always decent, perfect, and in place,
 Fills his short walk with judgment and with grace——
 'Tis not a circuit of five hundred lines
 Thro' which a hero rants away or whines,
 That e'er an actor's merit can decide,
 Or serve the candid critic for a guide——
 The poor plain foldier while the battle glows,
 Who darts courag'ous on his gathering foes,
 With dauntless breast beholds his danger rise,
 And nobly scorns to shudder, tho' he dies,
 Is, in my thought, a much more worthy name
 Than he, who dead to honour and to shame,
 Howe'er hung round with title or command,
 Intrench'd in dastard discipline can stand,
 On doubtful orders hesitates to fight,
 And rush on noon-day error to be right.

BRANSBY to greatness never makes pretence,
 Yet seldom wounds or decency or sense ;

E

But

But humbly careful, thro' the round he plays,
 Avoids all censure, if he meets no praise——

AICKIN has various requisites to please ;
 A handsome person, and an inborn ease,
 A manly accent, forcible and clear,
 A ready mem'ry, and a happy ear——
 And, if the poet with prophetic verse
 Thro' fate's dark womb can accurately pierce,
 An hour will come, when time's improving hand
 Shall teach his taste and judgment to expand,
 And in dramatic annals mark him fair,
 Tho' not a great, a serviceable play'r.

BURTON is one of those unnotic'd things,
 Who make good lords, or secondary kings,
 The liv'est mind to stupefaction lull,
 So wisely flat, and rationally dull——
 And yet, with all that wond'rous weight of lead,
 Which bounteous fate has giv'n him for a head,
 He still possesses such amazing arts
 To rise quite perfect in the heaviest parts,

That

That all, with me, must highly praise his pains,
And own his mem'ry, tho' they doubt his brains.

BUT now, let justice doubly arm the Muse,
And tenfold candour consecrate her views;
For now, her genuine equity of breast
Must stand a keen unmitigating test;
And those who think, that friendship or offence
Are yet unmingled in the poet's sense,
May fear, when female characters he draws,
Lest truth shou'd suffer from a softer cause.
Indeed, where female merit must be try'd,
'Tis hard to judge, and dang'rous to decide;
A secret something in our breasts will warm
Where eyes can languish, and where lips can charm;
And age itself instinctively will glow,
To press a ball of animated snow:
But yet, thro' all the pleadings we can trace
The wond'rous pleadings of a heav'nly face,
The bard still mindful of desert alone,
All partial ties will honestly disown;
From sacred conscience shudder to depart,
And speak his judgment, tho' he wounds his heart.

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VINCENT and WRIGHT, for what the poet cares,
 May warble sweetly thro' some trifling airs;
 But till some ray of kind perception rests
 With genial heat upon their mindless breasts,
 They still must raise our pity or offence,
 Whene'er they claim an intercourse with sense.

Not so the gentle BADDELY, whose form
 Sweet as her voice, can never fail to charm;
 Whose melting strain no ARNE's eccentric skill,
 As yet has tortur'd into modern thrill:
 She, if our bosoms are not wholly steel,
 In poor OPHELIA forces us to feel,
 From envy's self roots up the ling'ring sigh,
 And spreads red anguish o'er her mad'ning eye——
 Yet of such gifts, tho' happily possess'd,
 She rather *grows*, than *rushes* on the breast,
 And rather wins the passions to her course,
 Than strives to storm them by immediate force;
 Hence in the soft and tender walks alone,
 Her latent fund of talents must be shewn;
 And here a just distinction she must bear,
 If train'd with proper nicety and care——

BARRY.

BARRY has tones, which instantly impart
An aking sense of pleasure to the heart ;
But where a first-rate eminence we claim,
How small a title is a voice to fame !

HOPKINS in MILLWOOD, and the third-rate cast,
To public favour rushes on so fast,
That tho' unequal, widely to engage,
With many first-class parts upon the stage ;
Still, if her rank we accurately trace,
And give her worth due eminence of place,
Not six, perhaps, thro' BRITAIN we shall find
But what she leaves confid'rably behind——

FORM'D for those coarse and vulgar scenes of life,
Where low-bred rudeness always breathes in strife,
Where in some blessed unison we find
The deadliest temper with the narrowest mind ;
The boldest front that never knew a fear,
The flintiest eye that never shed a tear ;
There, not an actress certainly alive
Can e'er dispute pre-eminence with CLIVE ;

There

There boldly warm, yet critically true,
 The actual woman blazes on our view;
 From self-struck feeling nobly draws her praise,
 And soars, in fact, the character she plays—
 But, when to taste she makes the least pretence,
 Or madly aims at elegance and sense;
 When at high life she despicably tries,
 And flares her frowzy tiffue on our eyes,
 There the wide waddle, and the ceaseless bawl,
 Provoke the general ridicule of all,
 And nought but NEWGATE LUCY we can know,
 Trick'd out, and dizen'd for some city show.

POPE, tho' undamn'd with any casual part
 Of CLIVE's weak head, or execrable heart;
 Yet, with almost her readiness enjoys
 A coarse-wrote scene of turbulence and noise;
 And, like CLIVE too, in those superior spheres,
 Where ease delights and elegance endears,
 That shapeless form to grace so unally'd,
 That roaring laugh, and manliness of stride,

In spight of pity, force us to be just,
And all we feel is hatred or disgust——

Is it not odd, that still upon the stage
So few attend to person or to age ;
That aukward, clumsy, or distorted shapes,
Like new-caught bears, or badly-tutor'd apes,
Fast from those parts ridiculously crowd,
In which their honest merits are allow'd,
To stain some high and educated place,
Which asks the finest polishes of grace ?
Is it not odd too, that the hoary head
By some strange dæmon ludicrously led,
From those grave casts eternally withdraws,
In which it still can totter with applause,
To mumble, quite insensible of shame,
Some scene, all youthful energy and flame ?——
But such, alas ! is ignorance or pride,
That self still kindly will for self decide,
And while the passions rule the giddy hour,
We all mistake our wishes for our pow'r——

BUT

BUT see where sprightly ABINGTON appears,
Happy alike in person and in years;
Pleasing, tho' pert; familiar, tho' polite;
Nervous, tho' free; and spirited, tho' light:
As long as ease, vivacity, or fire,
Can find a chearful audience to admire,
With just regard her talents it will rate,
Strong, if not fine, and various, if not great.

PRITCHARD, tho' now unequal to her prime,
And with'ring swiftly on the stalk of time;
Yet still retains a magic kind of art,
To charm the eye, and twist about the heart,
Throws some refin'd delusion o'er the stage,
And quite absorbs infirmity and age;
Yet form'd, perhaps, the moment of her birth
For humour chiefly, elegance and mirth,
Her tragic parts are less replete with life
Than ESTIFANIA, or the Jealous Wife;
Hence, tho' I always honestly admire
Her MACBETH's madness, and her ZARA's fire,
Still when I see her obviously distress'd
To hurl the passion strongly on my breast; When

When I behold her in this dang'rous course,
Struggling for strength, and straining after force,
I wish her kindly in that walk of ease
Where ev'ry line, instructed how to please,
Springs from her lips superlatively warm,
Sure to delight, and positive to charm——

O that the hour, whene'er it is design'd
To bless the well known virtues of her mind,
On PALMER'S breast might charitably show'r
Some distant dawnings of the mother's pow'r,
One casual gleam of PRITCHARD might dispense,
And wake the beauteous statue into sense,
That no just censure on our fav'rite's race
May brand her name with relative disgrace.

YATES, with such wond'rous requisites to charm,
Such pow'rs of face, and majesty of form;
Such genuine grandeur with such sweetness join'd,
So clear a voice, so accurate a mind,
In Fame's first seat must certainly be plac'd,
While BRITAIN boasts of judgment, or of taste.

F

Say,

Say, in what walk of greatness, or of grace,
This matchless woman justly shall we place,
In which she still possesses not an art,
To melt, to fire, to agonize the heart?
If in CORDELIA to our minds we raise,
The more than magic softness she displays,
Will not a gush of instant pity spring,
To mourn the father, and lament the king?
Or, when the hapless BELVIDERA's tale,
Of brutal RENAULT turns the husband pale,
Does not the force with which she then exclaims,
Light every eye-ball into instant flames?
Rage with a fire too big to be express'd,
And rend the coldest fibres of the breast?
But, tho' unequall'd in those tragic parts,
Which fall with weight, and hang about our hearts,
'Tis not on these she wholly rests her name,
Or builds a title to dramatic fame——
Mark, in the gayer, polish'd scenes of life,
The sprightly mistress, or the high-bred wife,
What wond'rous grace and dignity unite
To fill us still with exquisite delight;

Mark

Mark how that nameless elegance and ease,
 Can teach ev'n MURPHY's ribaldry to please;
 With actual life his cold BELINDA warm,
 And tell that whining LOVEMORE how to charm—
 Peace to thy shade, and may the laurel bloom
 With deathless green, O CIBBER, on thy tomb!
 Peace wond'rous OLDFIELD ever wait thy shrine
 Thou once chos'n priestess of the sacred Nine!
 For while this YATES, the utmost reach can shew
 Of comic grace, or foul-distracting woe,
 We find no reason for the forrowing tear,
 Which else wou'd fall incessant on your bier.

CURSE on that bard's malignity of heart,
 How fraught foe'er with energy or art,
 Who once thro' YATES's requisites cou'd trace,
 Yet find no dawn of meaning in her face—
 Oft CHURCHILL, often when BELLARIO's fears
 His faith, his wrongs, have plung'd us into tears—
 Has the sweet anguish of this YATES's sighs
 Forc'd that stern bosom instantly to rise;
 Oft as her fine ductility of breast
 Some new-born passion on the bosom prest,

Taught the soft ball more meltingly to roll,
 And drew out every feature into soul;
 Then have I seen, this censor who cou'd find
 No glance whatever vivify'd with mind,
 Lost in a storm of unaffected woe,
 'Till pitying nature bid the torrent flow,
 Reliev'd the tortur'd bosom thro' the eye,
 And gave his sentence publicly the lye——

YET, high soever as the poet rates
 The well-known worth and excellence of YATES,
 He cannot give perfection to her share,
 Nor say she's wholly faultless as a play'r——
 Sometimes her sense too exquisitely strong,
 By needless force will deviate into wrong;
 And sometimes too, to throw this fault aside,
 She blends too little tenderness with pride:
 What need CALISTA, ent'ring on the stage,
 Exclaim, "Be dumb for ever," in a rage?
 Her faithful woman gives her woes relief,
 And justice calls for temper, tho' for grief——
 Again; when MODELY stands reveal'd to view,
 And comes all suppliant to a last adieu,

What

What need that cold indifference of air,
 That stiff unbending haughtiness of stare?
 'Tis true, the wretch deserves our utmost scorn——
 Yet her resentment is but newly born;
 And we shou'd read distinctly in her eyes,
 That still she loves, howe'er she may despise——
 Where women once a passion have profess'd,
 They may resent; but never can detest;
 Nor where the basest fav'rite they discard,
 Conceal all marks of pity and regard——

THUS has the poet on old DRURY try'd
 With care to judge, and candour to decide;
 And shou'd the kind indulgence of the times,
 Approve thus far his motley string of rhimes,
 His aim he yet more widely may pursue,
 And BEARD's light squadrons in their turn review——
 Thro' all the pomp of coronations pierce,
 And give their best manœuvres in his verse——
 Here for the present then, he drops his plan,
 Puts off the critic, and assumes the man;

Convinc'd,

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Convinc'd, if truth shou'd only warm his Muse,
 The PUBLIC smile will still promote her views;
 And conscious too, shou'd prejudice or pride
 Appear alone her sentiments to guide;
 The PUBLIC scorn her pen must cease to brand,
 The sooner justice strikes it from her hand.

F I N I S.

